1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
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The Barlamomo occupy a similar position in relation to the Murngin. The Dai and Barlamomo can hardly be ranked as tribes, except that the terms are loosely used by the natives for groups of clans belonging to either moiety; and since they cannot be phratries and belong to both groups of the dual division, and since there is a vague recognition of their distinctiveness in their having names and being considered by the people to the north as each one people, they have been ranked as tribes by the writer, with full recognition that such a designation is too ample and solid a term to describe them.

The Djawark and Darlwongo clans sometimes are included among the Dai; the Marderpa group may be classed as Dai, Murngin, or Ritarngo, according to the feeling of the people within the clan or those without who distinguish them.

Within the region east of the Yandjinung, Burera, Djinba, and Ritarngo tribes, and including the peoples known as Yaernungo, Dai, Barlamomo, and Murngin, there is considerable linguistic homogeneity. All the peoples included in the latter four tribes can understand the various dialectic variations found throughout the area. The greatest divergence in dialect is among the Yaernungo, but the Liaalaomir of the Goyder River on the one hand, and the Wanguri and Warumeri of Arnhem Bay on the other, also present considerable variation in speech. The peoples belonging to the tribes in the area mentioned above cannot understand the languages of the other tribes along their borders unless they have learned them as separate tongues. Linguistic ability is very marked among all these people. It would be difficult to find a Murngin adult who could not speak three or four languages, and frequently men speak seven and eight.

There is greater difference between these northern languages of Australia than there is between French and English. The Burera have the most divergent tongue and are definitely affiliated linguistically with the more western peoples such as the Gun-wing-u and Maung.

As will be seen from the map, the Murngin have many more clans than the other tribes. It cannot be stated as a definite hypothesis, but very likely that the group of the Murngin associated together under the moiety "linguistic" terms as Djambarpingu and Koparpingu are one people and differentiated from the rest of the Murngin. When asked to what people they belong, they always reply Djambarpingu or Koparpingu, according to the moiety. The clans usually classed as belonging to the two groups are:

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101 DJAMBARPINGU (Dua)
174 Liagaomir
Naladaer
614 Djirin
Gwiyula
Djapu
Maradunggimi (sometimes classed with Barlamomo tribe)
Djawark

KOPARPINGU (Yiritja)
Daiuror
Gwiyamil
Birkili
Burilung (sometimes classed with Barlamomo tribe)

If the above hypothesis is true, this group in an earlier period was confined to the area around Buckingham Bay, Arnhem Bay, Elcho Island, and the English Company Islands. I was unable to find a general name covering both divisions to substantiate this historical contention. The Malay trader undoubtedly widened the horizon of the society by his movements along the coast, and with the introduction of the dugout canoe made possible longer, more rapid journeys and wider contacts among the peoples of the various clans comprising this and the present Murngin group; before this time the only means of travel had been by foot or by the frail bark canoe and rafts. It seems likely to me that the Malay's advent, which occurred at least several hundred years ago, provides sufficient explanation for the breakdown of the earlier tribal grouping—which, if similar to that of present-day tribes was a very weak manifestation at best—and for the formation of a larger Murngin group.

197 Pronunciation varies greatly locally. This linguistic differentiation does not coincide with tribal areas, although there is a tendency for the tribes to be linguistically distinguished. As has been stated, all the clans consider themselves linguistically distinct, and members of the two moieties believe they speak different dialects. This insistence on linguistic difference is so extreme that members of the same clan pronounce their words with a suitable amount of variation. Any attempt to state that this dialect or that method of pronunciation is a standard and exact one is likely to be a projection of our own ethnocentric linguistic values. The western Europeans and the Americans, particularly since the advent of the public school, have made an extreme fetish of standard English and correct pronunciation. There has been, with the general urge, a general standardization of speech. We frequently assume that the primitives always do as we do in their speech habits. This may or may not be true. The Murngin have an extreme

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how to make it. There was no arduous labor attached to collecting turtle shell to trade for an axe, for the shell came as a by-product to the pursuit of harpooning turtles. The making of the stone axe took time and a considerable amount of hard labor; but to go turtle hunting was a pleasure, since turtle harpooning expeditions are not only for the anticipated enjoyment of the flesh and to supply the family larder, but also for the pure joy of stalking the turtle, spearing it, and bringing it home to an admiring audience which could appreciate one's abilities as a hunter and a man of importance. Undoubtedly pride of workmanship is felt by a native axe-maker. His fellow tribesmen always express their appreciation of a well-turned-out axe or spear head, but the social approbation given to the two occupations is completely disproportionate.

The turtle shell had never been used, and had been discarded until the Malay came; that it should become an article of high value to the trader was an item of some amusement and a fortuitous circumstance for the aborigines. Since the women gather oysters, the trading of pearls for the Malay objects of trade was looked upon by the black as an even greater bit of luck than the trading of shell.

The trepang (*beche-de-mer*) industry demanded more effort. In this activity the Malay showed himself a practical sociologist, for he again made no vain attempt to change Murngin civilization to his liking, but merely used the institutions he found among them to satisfy his wants.

Canoes were given to certain men who, with their clansmen, gathered the sea slugs from the low-lying sand banks at low tide. All this the native understood, since it was but one added particular to a general type of behavior; and although the blacks do not eat trepang, this animal belongs to a group of seashore fauna which are gathered and eaten, and could have been added to the diet without any change in the methods of acquiring food. But there is one element in the economic structure of Murngin civilization that must have made this adaptation somewhat difficult, since the sexual division of labor allots the task of gathering mollusk and other seashore foods to the women. Men only gather these articles of diet for their own use when they have no women with them and there is nothing else to eat. It is very likely that if the natives could not have speared fish or harpooned dugong or turtle while looking for trepang beds, the Malays would have found the industry unprofitable, if not impossible.

The Malay brought the tamarind fruit with him. The seeds that were thrown away sprouted, and now the lands where he voyaged are known by their growth of the tamarind tree. Many of these trees are very large. The circles of trees which surround the spot where once a huge tamarind tree had grown show that they are secondary growths and do not represent the earliest period of the Malay contact. No one knows how long the Malay has been making his voyages to Australia. The writer attempted to find

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an approximate date of his first intrusion into the Arafura Sea by means of the tamarind tree. A few of the larger trees were cut down and cross-sections taken to show the number of growth rings on the tree. It was thought that by determining the amount of time shown by the tree rings and adding approximately two-thirds of the time it took the parent tree to grow, it might be possible to say at least that the Malay had been coming for the period represented by their growth, even though we could not say he had been in North Australia before then. Unfortunately, according to competent botanists, it is impossible to date a tamarind by its tree rings.

The writer excavated two large shell mounds on Millingimbi Island, in the Crocodile group, both of which had tamarind trees near, or growing on them. One of these kitchen middens surrounded a water hole that was known generally to all the aborigines as Macassar Well. Although I was able to accumulate a large collection of native artifacts in the eight feet of shell excavated, I did not find any that were Malay. This, however, does not demonstrate a late Malay invasion because negative evidence does not prove the Malay was not there. Furthermore, the bases of the trunks of the tamarind trees on the mound were well covered with refuse shell. One tree was, by measurement, well over a foot under the accumulated shell. Since the accumulated refuse was well packed and hardened by time, this seems to point to a considerable period of Malay contact with North Australia. The number of people using this mound was never large, and it would take such a group a considerable period of time to throw away a sufficient number of mollusk shells to form a foot of debris around the base of a tamarind tree.

The ripe tamarind pods are eaten and greatly appreciated by the natives. They are looked upon as a part of the general economic flora, although it is known that they were derived from the Malay. No native would ever think of planting a tamarind tree for later use.

From this brief summary of the Malay influence on the material culture of the Murngin, it is obvious that the number of Malay contributions was small, and especially when considered from the larger aspect of the total aboriginal culture, of no great numerical importance. Looked at from the point of view of Malay civilization, it can be seen that the greater part of Malay technology was not adopted. All the objects taken over by Murngin culture were but modifications of original indigenous inventions, with the possible exception of the Malay pipe. The exotic dugout canoe, with its mast and sail, partially took the place of the bark canoe, but did not entirely supplant it. The tamarind tree, although a part of the culture because it contributes, however slightly, to the Murngin larder, is not a true cultural element, since Murngin civilization is in no way responsible for its existence. It is an integral part of Malay culture, since it is planted and is

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whites of the north have for the black men of this district. The killing of several whites and Japanese has put a heavy fear in the hearts of all intruders into these parts. The natives have a reputation for treachery, largely because of their ambushing of several white pearlers and night attacks on a few Japanese boats, where all the men were killed, in retaliation for mistreatment of their women.

These last few remarks have been added further to substantiate the possible causes which prevented race mixture when the Malays were coming into North Australia. Since the rapacious civilization of the West cannot produce half-castes in this region, it is less probable that the more gentle Malay culture would produce racial hybrids in North Australia. Tindale, in his article on the Groote Eylandt natives, says that the Malays were interested in acquiring native women to take home with them. I can find no evidence of this among the Murngin and their neighboring tribes. A number of native men, however, did go to Macassar and the other islands whence the Malays had come. The writer met one or two of these men who had served as pearlers on seasonal voyages on Malay boats.

The influence of the Malay race and culture has not been important in northeastern Arnhem Land. There are but slight traces of hybridization in race or culture. The greatest influence is found in the material culture, and the least in the social institutions of Murngin civilization. Compared with the total number of traits found in aboriginal culture, those added from the more eastern civilization are very few indeed and, with the exception of the dugout complex, have had no significant influence on the development of Murngin civilization. On the other hand, when an examination is made of the even larger number of traits found in Malay culture, and they are contrasted with the very few adopted by the Murngin from the Malays, it becomes even further demonstrable that Murngin civilization remained very near to what it was before the Malay arrived, and that the Malay gave little of his own civilization to aboriginal Australia.

### History of Burial Customs

The Murngin now finally dispose of their dead by placing the bones in a symbolically carved hollow log and planting the log upright within the camp. This is true of all the tribes except those in Cape Wessel Island, where the natives, after wrapping the bones of the dead in paper bark, put them in rock shelters. I am told by island natives that the rock shelter is used also in the interior back of Blue Mud Bay. All the natives to the west, such as the Gunwingu and Maung, use the hollow-log method of disposal. Historically this situation raises an interesting problem of priority of burial customs. The distribution of the rock burial method in the far

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north and southeast on the periphery not only of the Murngin but also of the whole of Australia suggests that this method was first and that the hollow log is a later intrusion. Against this is the fact that the use of the hollow log as a bone repository is not an isolated item in Murngin material culture, for the log is used as a basic material for the making of a number of objects such as the trumpet and the drum and their smoking pipes.

An examination of these last three objects from an historical point of view proves fruitful when we remember that the pipe is quite recent in Murngin culture, having been brought in by the Malays. The Uvar drum seems to be fairly late because it is associated with the Ulmark ceremony wherever it is found, and the Ulmark is only partly distributed in the Murngin clans and also seems to be spreading in from the south. It is also not found in the northeastern clans where the hollow-log burial is absent. There are a number of clans farther south than Wessel Island which do not have the Ulmark drum. Of the objects made from a hollow-log form, only one seems comparatively old within Murngin culture. Their comparative recency lends color to the belief that the hollow-log burial is more recent, particularly when one remembers its distribution. This last bit of evidence is obviously insufficient by itself and is merely offered as support for the general thesis of the recency of log burial.

The conclusive proof of this historical induction comes from archaeological finds. Around Arnhem Bay, Buckingham Bay and at Caddell Straits, as well as farther inland, the bones of great numbers of skeletons can be found in the dry rock shelters at the present time. Some of them were collected by the writer. They had been laid out in burial position and some had pieces of bark lying with them. The natives said that they were the bones of very old people who once lived there but who belonged to a different race. Some of them attach the destruction myths to the disappearance of this race whose bones repose in the rock shelters, and others said they were the bones of Wongar people. The bones showed indications of having been covered with red ocher, and the skulls when measured and observed demonstrated that they were authentic remains of Australoid peoples and were undoubtedly racially the same people who occupy the region at the present time. The Murngin knew that these burials were the same as those at Wessel Island, and it was finding the rock burials which brought out the information that Wessel Island people still use this type of interment. With the evidence of a peripheral distribution of rock shelter burials at the present time associated with the findings of rock shelter burials of a former time in the central Murngin area, it seems fairly conclusive proof that the Murngin of the whole area once used the rock shelter method, and that the log coffin interment is more recent than the other.

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ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE GROUND STONE AXE

The ground stone axe is normally considered to be comparatively recent in Australia because it is not distributed throughout the whole of the continent; it is not found in the southwestern part of Australia. Such evidence is not conclusive since the spear-thrower, which is looked upon as an old trait by many authorities, is not found in certain sections of southeastern Australia. It is largely because European stratification shows it to be more recent than the chipping or flaking techniques found in the Old Stone Age cultures in the sites of such countries as France and Spain that this assumption has been made for Australia. The stone axe is the only ground stone implement found in Australia, for the knives, spear heads and similar tools and weapons are made by the chipping and flaking techniques. The Murngin possess this implement; the writer made a fairly large collection of them. The stone axe is little used by the people on the coast because they have acquired Malay iron axes and more recently European ones, but nevertheless they are still in use in the interior and occasionally along the coast.

Because the axe is stone and durable it gives one a good opportunity to use archaeological methods to study its approximate age in Murngin culture and possibly Australian civilization, since there were a number of large shell mounds distributed generally along the Murngin coast and in particular in the island of Millingimbi in the Crocodile group where the present Christian mission is now located. Two of these Millingimbi mounds were excavated by the writer with the help of aboriginal labor and mission picks and shovels.

The largest mound was located about one hundred yards or so from the shore and was shaped like the crater of a volcano with a rock water hole in its depths. This crater-like appearance was so real that the missionaries had called it Meteor Well because an explorer a year or two before my arrival had pronounced it the result of a meteor's fall. Actually, it was the result of human habitation spread around a clan well and the dropping of oyster and other shells around this water hole. This mound was about 425 feet long. The crater was approximately eighty five to ninety feet across. The mound itself was eight feet wide and eight and one-half feet deep from its highest part to the earth's surface. It tapered off gradually to each side. The Murngin women were still adding shells to the heap by bringing to the water hole for opening baskets full of bivalves dug out of the mud flats along the coast or pried from the rocks of the oyster beds. The seacoast had a bountiful supply of shell food on this side of the island. A trench was sunk in the mound running from the outside to the center of the crater. It measured five feet in width and was excavated through the shell into a foot or more of earth, which gave a fair sampling of the site.

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342 outer two. They are placed at close intervals to form an almost continuous surface. Long pieces of stringy bark are then bent over the topmost ridgepole and down each side of the roof. On top of this are placed many thicknesses of paper bark, and finally stones and logs to make them fast.

The rafters are fastened to the ridgepoles by tying them with turtle rope and fiber string. They are sometimes made firm by making each with a forked end which is hooked on to the cross-piece, the two being tied together. Bark is used for the walls and sewn on to the edge of the floors and edge of the roof. The walls of the two ends of the house are only half filled in, so that the parts that remain open function as doors. Forked sticks are used as ladders.

[373] Even though this house is used in the hottest part of the year, many small fires are made on the ground beneath it, since it is primarily constructed to keep away mosquitoes which come in countless swarms at this time. The fires are so built that they smoke more than burn. Since the house is on high ground, running water caused by the large floods does not put the fires out.

342 After the rains, when mosquitoes are still bad, the house often consists
764 of only four piles with flooring. This latter type of structure is also used for platform burial when the corpse is not interred or placed in a tree; such a structure would be specially made for this purpose, and away from the camp.

342 Because this house is far more elaborate than any other type found in
174 northeastern Arnhem Land and has a very restricted distribution, and because of the known constant contact with the Malays who had pile dwellings, there comes a problem of whether it is of native invention or was brought by the Macassars. If one considers only the house itself without its related structures, there is a tendency to believe it comes from outside. This point of view does not orientate the invention to the rest of the material culture.

The essential elements of the mosquito house are: (1) the upright forked pole, and (2) the ridgepole connecting two forked sticks. The forked stick is found all over northern Australia and even southward. Baskets and other articles of the material culture are hung on it. The women use it when soaking the poisonous matter out of cycad palm nuts, and they lean it against the trunks of tall trees they wish to climb. In fact, it has a great variety of uses, and is a constant feature of native camps. The slightly more complex invention of two forked poles with a cross-piece is also found throughout Northern and down into Central Australia. It, too, is a constant feature of native camps and is used as a carryall, if trees are not available from which to hang things. The use of two parallel ridgepoles on four forked sticks as piles is only one step further in the elaboration of the essential idea of forked sticks with connecting ridgepoles. It seems, then, that the idea of a pile house is completely indigenous, although it

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may be possible that Malay influence brought the final elaboration which formed the gabled superstructure. The pile house is never used in the water and is found only on raised ground. The native explanation of why the more eastern parts of the Murngin country do not possess the mosquito house is that there are not so many mosquitoes here and the ordinary hut with the fire in front works better than the mosquito house. It is probably true, since the morasses of the Goyder and Glyde Rivers breed more mosquitoes than any other part of the country.

Another type of shelter found in the north is the stone cave dwelling. Dwellings of this type are used during the wet season in the lonely hill country in the interior, on Wessel Island, and sporadically around Buckingham Bay.

2. Articles That Are Worn

Although the nights of the dry season are at times quite cold, no clothing has been invented or borrowed by these people, as were kangaroo skin cloaks farther south.

It has been said that need does not produce invention, and the Australian black has been pictured as an example of this theory. Such criticism is colored by the prejudices of our own social standards. The days in Arnhem Land are always warm. No clothes are needed for comfort. The occasional cold nights are made comfortable by windbreaks and small fires built to produce ample warmth. In other words, instead of using one of our methods, the Australian has utilized a different invention to combat the cold. During the rainy season clothes are a hindrance rather than a help.

It has been asserted further that the black lacked the intelligence to invent clothes, since as soon as he came in contact with white civilization he donned the habiliments of Caucasian culture. He has, around white settlements where native civilization has disappeared, adopted the clothing of western civilization, but this is not so much an adoption by his own culture of an element of white civilization to meet his needs, as a more or less complete abandonment of his own material culture and his adoption of the white men as his master and the white men's culture as his own. The wearing of clothing has done more harm, destroyed more natives, made the aborigine far less adapted to his natural surroundings in the north, than has almost any other element of white culture. His naked condition before the coming of the white man was far more appropriate to the country he lived in.

*String.*—String is basic to most of the articles worn by the Murngin. All string, composed of only two strands, is made of vegetable or animal fiber: the inner bark of certain trees (the hibiscus, in particular), the inner bark of their roots, and opossum fur or human hair. The string of vegetable matter is usually fine and carefully twisted, while the other is loosely woven

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OS17 Muraglia OS17



design of the *riredjingu mata* of Port Bradshaw changes to sloping lines which symbolize fallen palm leaves. This *ngeimil* design is used on a bark painting, Pl. 123A, and an engraved pipe, Fig. 64A.

Figure 64F is an unidentified design associated with the *Djunkgao* sisters west of Arnhem Bay. Although it is not certain that this is a *mata* design, the fact that it is used on two bark paintings, Pl. 87A, B, associated with waterholes belonging to the *Djunkgao* sisters, suggests that it might be so.

Figure 64G is the *djambarpingu mata* design. It represents the geese, *wurumatji*, and their tracks at the Duwalaila swamps east of Arnhem Bay. This design was painted on a sacred object, Pl. 128C, and on the body of an initiate, Pl. 129D. The *djambarpingu mata* is an excellent example of how a *mata* (language group) spreads over a number of *mala* (clan groups). According to Warner,[12] the *djambarpingu* language group includes the following adjacent clans or *malas*: *liagnomir*, *djirin*, *gwiyula*, *djapu*, *naladaer* and *djawark*. Further research will, no doubt, reveal that this characteristic applies to a number of the language groups.

## THE POSSIBLE ORIGIN OF THE MATA DESIGNS

An examination of Indonesian art revealed that many of the *jiritja mata* designs from north-eastern Arnhem Land are present in the art of the Central Celebes. As the Celebes and other Indonesian islands are north-west, and the natives from those islands sailed to Australia on the north-west wet-season wind, returning to their homes on the dry-season south-easterly, it is not surprising that their art motifs should have diffused among the aborigines of north-eastern Arnhem Land, particularly among those of the *jiritja* moiety, who have adopted all the later innovations of the Asiatic trepangers and the white man—for example tobacco, wooden canoes, the Malay smoking pipe and so on. As mentioned previously (p. 325), the *dua* moiety possesses the older things, bark canoes, spear-thrower and stone spears. Nevertheless, one of the *dua mata* designs, the *djapu*, Fig. 61A, was found on an engraved smoking pipe from southern New Guinea.

Figure 64O, a cloth design from the Central Celebes,[13] somewhat resembles the *mangalili jiritja mata* design painted on the left thigh of *Laitjun*, Pl. 135A.

Figure 64Q, another cloth design from the same area,[14] resembles the *gumaitj mata* design (Fig. 64N).

Figure 64R, also a cloth design from the Central Celebes,[15] is similar to the triangular *jiritja* cloud symbol from Cape Arnhem.[16] This design, which is common in Central Celebian art, was also found on a wooden drum from the Tugeri tribe, Dutch New Guinea.[17] According to the aboriginal who engraved

12. Warner (1937), pp. 43-6.
13. Kaudern (1944), A, Fig. 105.
14. Kaudern (1944), 2, Pl. LXIII.
15. Kaudern (1944), 3, Pl. XXIV.
16. Pl. 107D.
17. Collection of South Australian Museum, No. A9286.

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OII7 Murngin OII7



the smoking pipe illustrated in Fig. 63B, this triangular pattern was engraved on a canoe which had been cast up on the beach near Port Bradshaw.

Figure 64P, a rubbing from a smoking pipe from southern New Guinea,[18] is almost a duplicate of the *dua djapu mata* design, Fig. 61A.

CONCLUSIONS

The art of the north-east coast differs from the art of the rest of Arnhem Land in several important respects: (a) it is more complicated and colourful; (b) there are a number of alien symbols which indicate that it has been influenced by sources outside Australia, but that this influence is of comparatively recent origin; and (c) certain designs are the exclusive property of specified groups of aborigines.

(a) Whereas the basic art of Arnhem Land consists of single or multiple figures on a plain ground, that on the north-eastern coasts has a wide range of designs, skilfully and interestingly arranged within the painting area. There are few open spaces, as in the basic art, the background of almost all of the paintings being filled in with attractive arrangements of cross-hatching in red, yellow, black and white. The designs, their pleasing arrangement and the colourful textures of the cross-hatching, make the art of north-eastern Arnhem Land the most decorative that we know of in Australia. In contrast with the Oenpelli art, however, that of the north-east has no unusual designs such as X-ray and 'hooker' figures, 'joint marks', men with hook-shaped faces. Nor does it, like the *Mimi* art of Oenpelli, depict human beings in action.

The art of the north-east is essentially a static art with all the subjects at rest. The north-eastern art also has a number of abstract designs which cannot be interpreted without the aid of the artist who produced them.

(b) All evidence suggests that many of the elements in the decorative north-eastern art are of recent origin. It is known that the aborigines, about two generations ago, adopted the practice of carving human figures in the round from their Indonesian visitors and it is likely that they have copied, from the same source, many of the complicated art forms, cross-hatched designs, and at least some of the symbols used by the clan and language groups.

Pobasoo, the Macassan chief, told Flinders, when they met in the Malay Roads during 1803,[19] that twenty years previously he was the first Indonesian to visit the north-eastern coast of Arnhem Land. If Pobasoo's statement was correct, and we have no evidence as yet to the contrary, then we can assume that the aborigines of those parts had not been subject to foreign influences before that date. This hypothesis is further supported by the fact that the art of the north-eastern Arnhem Land has not spread far inland. It is confined to a limited area near the coast, even though the myths and ceremonies depicted on the bark

18. Collection of South Australian Museum, No. A1020).
19. Flinders (1814), vol. 2, p. 229.

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OII7 Murngin OII7

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the tides are high. When the moon is in the zenith at sunrise or sunset, the tides are low. The aborigines, noting these facts, believe that the high tides running into the full and new moon make it fat and round. When the tides are low the water pours into the sea beneath and the moon becomes thin.

Plate 150D illustrates the myth of the moon, the dugong, the man, *Guripan*, and his wife. The moon, *Nalimbu*, is the central semicircle. Above, the three torpedo-shaped figures are the yams, *wuralki*, which he took into the sky with him. The stars on either side of the moon represent the man *Guripan* and his wife, whose misfortune was responsible for the plentiful supply of *takia*.

On the right of the lower panel is the dugong-woman, *Bulwokman*, and on the left the footmarks of the pandanus-tree men, *Gurun-gurun*. The cross-hatching in the lower panel symbolizes the large wave breaking on the beach, frightening the dugong just as the pandanus tree men were about to spear it.

Plate 150C deals with the same myth, but with less detail. Again the torpedo-like designs are the yams, *wuralki*, taken into the sky by *Nalimbu*. The moon, as a crescent in the last quarter, is called *moilboni*, and as a disc, lower left, is *lomurk*. The cross-hatched ring, which is regarded as the wet-weather camp of the moon, represents the halo commonly seen round the moon during misty weather.

### *The Southern Cross and Pointers, Baluing*

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The Southern Cross and Pointers are looked upon as a stingray (the Cross) being eternally pursued round the southern sky by a shark (the Pointers). The myth is associated with Caledon Bay.

In Pl. 155D the four upper stars in the painting (the Southern Cross) represent a stingray, and the two lower stars (the Pointers) a shark, which is chasing the stingray. These creatures are shown to the right. The wide difference between the myths of the Southern Cross at Yirrkalla and Groote Eylandt[16] less than one hundred and twenty miles apart indicates a minimum of social contacts between the two tribes.

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### *The Milky Way, Milimuin*

In creation times the Milky Way, *milimuin*, was a watercourse near Blue Mud Bay.

At that time two brothers, *Nunguminl*, the elder, and *Jikaweun*, the younger, went fishing in a bark canoe. When near Woodah Island[17] they caught a rock cod, *guruku*, and were on their long homeward journey when a heavy storm sprang up. A large wave fell aboard, badly straining the frail bark canoe and filling it with water. The next wave, breaking the canoe in halves, left the brothers struggling in the sea. For many hours the two brothers swam towards the distant mainland. Then the arms of the younger brother became so swollen he had forgotten to remove his arm-bands that he finally collapsed and was

16. Groote Eylandt myth, p. 18. 17. Map, Fig. 3.

[121] 177 Before discussing the effect of the ceremonial exchange cycle which was greatly stimulated by the impact of this dynamic force—the infiltration of Indonesian culture—upon the relatively simple culture pattern of these people, I shall describe in outline the typical culture of this area. It can be shown that in their own culture pattern, before the impact of Malay or proto-Malay culture, the natives of Arnhem Land already possessed the essential elements of a simple economic structure, with recognition of "value" and "wealth", the beginnings of the development of craft specialisation, mechanisms for the organisation of work and the carrying out of communal enterprises, and very definite ideas about the division of labour.

● 174 It is not possible to state with certainty when the first contact with the Indonesian visitors commenced, but in 1803 Matthew Flinders[8] learned from the crews of Malay praus whom he met on the north coast, that sixty praus, with a total of 1000 men, all from the Gulf of Boni in the Celebes, were on the coast of Arnhem Land at one time and were engaged in fishing for trepang. Although some of these people informed Flinders that they had visited the coast for the first time only twenty years before, and that they were then among the first of their people to do so,

177 431 619 721 Celebes came to Arnhem Land, it is probable that the *gerri* introduced by these visitors did much to overcome the effects of the segmentary organisation and to infuse life and vitality into the ceremonial exchange cycle which developed on a large scale in this territory. One of the aims of this paper is to show how the impact of this virile Indonesian culture may have overcome the effects of the intensely *segmentary* organisation. This effect of the ceremonial exchange cycle on social organisation is discussed in detail at a later stage in this paper.

[8] Matthew Flinders, *A Voyage to Terra Australis*, Vol. 2, 1814, pp. 228-233.

9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943)1949
OI17 Murngin OI17

Matthew Flinders had already recorded evidence which he had found as far south as Vanderlin Island in the Sir Edward Pellew Group on the southern shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria, of previous visits by some Asiatic people. 174

From the general demeanour of the natives of the Gulf of Carpentaria, as recorded by Flinders in the narrative of his voyages, it is highly probable that praus from Indonesia had visited Arnhem Land, at least sporadically, for a very long time, much longer than the statement made to Flinders would suggest. But even on the information which he recorded, we know that regular voyages to Australia occurred at least as far back as about 1780.

The Australian aborigines are extremely conservative, and before absorbing any important element of culture, social or material, they generally give it a place in their myth pattern and bring it within the totemic scheme. This provides a background in tradition and so gives a charter for its use. The importance of this will be appreciated more readily when the account of the social organisation in Eastern Arnhem Land, which follows on pp. 8-13, has been read. 177 181

Eastern Arnhem Land, come from *kumur kätjirk* across the Liverpool River. *Källämba*, (forehead fillets), *märbät* or *tjänauwo*, (woven "bibs" or aprons), hooked spears of the types *bäkkärämma*, *mat'tji'tji* ("biting bags" used to hold between the teeth in fighting), as well as *bärlatta*, (heavy fighting clubs). 431 439

(4) *Kumur djalk. ŋämbi lirra*, (*ŋämbi* spear heads), *källi-gälli*, (boomerangs), *kai'u*, (chain mesh dilly bags), and *ŋätjin* or *bulnyin*, (opossum fur pubic coverings or aprons made from opossum fur). So a *ŋämbi* spear coming to a Mildjiŋi man of the Glyde River travels from the quarry at ŋillipidji near Blue Mud Bay in Wagilläk territory via the Ritar'ŋo, (a nomadic group of *yiritja* moiety having a big territory in the interior of Arnhem Land).

(5) *Kumur kärin*, the chief route by which boomerangs (*källi-gälli*) enter North-eastern Arnhem Land, also provides hooked spears with bamboo shafts of several types made in Central and North Central Arnhem Land; belts of human hair of large ceremonial type—an iron-headed spear of special type known as *lämma* with a very short, broad blade that distinguishes it from *kaiyit*. Today (in contrast with former conditions[40]), it yields also *djimindi* (wire for

[40] The first source of such valued *gerri* as axes, iron, wire, calico and tobacco, for the whole of Arnhem Land, was the visiting fleet from the Celebes or elsewhere in Indonesia, and there is evidence that articles of this order were passed far inland long before there was any settlement in the Northern Territory. But today the order is reversed to some extent and a considerable amount of calico, wool, blankets, axes, iron, wire and fish hooks passes north from the settled cattle country along the *dukurr* of the ceremonial exchange cycle. When this *gerri* reaches Arnhem Land it is still known as *munditk* because it belongs to the category of objects which came originally from *kumur munditk*. [177 174]

9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943) 1949
OI17 Murngin OI17

## 6.

# THE INFLUENCE OF INDONESIAN CULTURE ON THE IDEA OF WEALTH AND THE CEREMONIAL EXCHANGE CYCLE

●174 Into the setting which has been described, superimposed upon this organisation, came the virile culture brought by the Indonesian visitors to the coast of Arnhem Land. We do not know when these visits first commenced or even who the first of the visitors were, but the evidence seems to indicate that they began at a comparatively recent date, [114] although probably considerably earlier than the time suggested to Matthew Flinders[45], who in 1803 met with a number of praus on the north-east coast of Arnhem Land at a place which he named in consequence "Malay Road", close to the English Company's Islands. The crews of these vessels which Matthew Flinders encountered came from the Gulf of Boni in the Celebes. They informed Flinders that people from that territory had made six or seven voyages to the coast of Arnhem Land during the preceding 20 years and that they themselves had been among the first to make the voyage. This, if correct, would place the date of the first Indonesian contacts at about 1783.

We know that these voyages continued regularly well into the present century, when they were apparently stopped

[45] Op. cit., Vol. 2, page 231.

9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943)1949
OI17 Murngin OI17

by repeated intervention of the Australian Customs Authorities after Federation. The Indonesian influence in Arnhem Land, therefore, probably extended over a period of nearly two hundred years, perhaps much longer. Although there is no conclusive evidence as to the time when these visits commenced, there is reason for the belief that they occurred over a relatively long period, and a study of the culture shows that the visitors from Indonesia exercised a strong influence on the people. This is apparent in their material culture, and to an even greater extent in their social and ceremonial life and mythology. I have mentioned (page 71, footnote) my surprise at finding in settled country on the Roper River, even before I entered the then isolated country of Arnhem Land, fine iron spear heads from Blue Mud Bay, an area where iron was still difficult to obtain and much coveted. The natives of this region have been suspected of attacking *bêche-de-mer* and other craft merely for the iron in the water tanks and trepang boilers, from which, by a laborious process of hammering and grinding, they manufacture fine spear heads. This was in 1935, when I had been sent by the Commonwealth Government to investigate unrest and tribal fighting in Arnhem Land. The people of Caledon and Blue Mud Bays were regarded as warlike and aggressive and were still greatly feared by the natives to the south, with whom they had little contact and who would not have entered their territory.

Subsequent work in Arnhem Land revealed the existence of the great ceremonial exchange cycle which has been described in detail on page 67 above. But while the *kumur märnda* relationship exists throughout the whole of Arnhem Land, and while the ceremonial exchange cycle draws *gerri* from far beyond this region, there is evidence for the belief that it was the visits of Macassar voyagers, who

brought articles of great material and social value, which gave a special impetus and furnished the "drive", not only for the circulation of *gerri* over hundreds of miles of country, but which did much to overcome also the organised "opposition" between clans.

These observations contrast strongly with the conclusions of Professor W. Lloyd Warner[46] who states:

"The trade with the Malays seems to have been purely on a basis of exchange, with very little else in its social content. Nevertheless it had little effect on the aboriginal ideas of trade . . . The native sometimes exchanges things he possesses for the things he needs and cannot get from his own territory . . .

"All this," Warner considers, "again shows the strong resistance of the Murngin culture to outside influence. The Malay trader came for an exchange of goods and nothing else; and it would be thought that, in the hundreds of years he is likely to have been in Arnhem Land, he would have given a new impetus to Murngin ideas of exchange. But as far as can be determined, the Murngin ideas are no different from what they were before he arrived . . ."

And again, after stressing the value of the iron axes brought to this territory by the Malays, Warner says, "It is unlikely that many iron axes ever reached the interior peoples." Of these axes he adds, "The substitution of the iron tomahawk (brought in as an article of trade by the Malays) for the stone axe can be understood, since the iron implement is a far more capable instrument, and a more important reason—the tomahawk was easily acquired and it was not necessary to learn how to make it. There was no arduous labour attached to collecting turtle shell to trade for an axe, for the shell came as a by-product to the pursuit

[46] W. Lloyd Warner, *A Black Civilisation*, 1937, (pp. 458ff).

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

# *Preface*

ARNHEM LAND! Here fish climb trees, the sun sets in green fire and women hoard human skulls. It is the home of Stone Age man who shaves his head, and dismembers and bakes a body before eating it to absorb warrior-strength. The witch-doctor is supreme and treats fevers by massaging, pummelling and sucking gravel, blood, and animal bones from dumbfounded patients. Beside the backwaters of the untamed north, Stone Age nomads continue their ageless life and timeless practices.

Little is known of the Australian aboriginal except that in the Stone Age he broke away or was driven out from the rest of the human race and wandered to Australia. He possessed a continent at the cost of becoming isolated from the rest of the human race. Other nomadic hunters evolved into pastoralists or agriculturists but the aboriginal was denied normal development, for neither Stone Age nomad nor modern scientist has succeeded in adapting indigenous food-plants to everyday needs, and no Australian animal has been domesticated—as Dr Gilruth once succinctly remarked: 'You can't ride a wallaby or milk a wombat.'

Aboriginal development was not stimulated by the white man and his nineteenth-century civilization. As early as 1860, the explorer McDouall Stuart built his cairn, marked his tree, and recorded: 'I am now camped in the centre of Australia; I have marked a tree and planted the British flag there. We gave three cheers for the flag, the emblem of civilization, religion, and liberty, and may it be a sign to the natives that the dawn of liberty, civilization, and Christianity is about to break on them.' But every pioneer was not a Stuart, and as Dr Madigan says: 'What did break on the



[p vi is blank]

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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CHAPTER FOUR

# *Men of the Stone Age*

TANTALIZING mystery envelops Australia's Stone Age nomads, and the enigma of their history and Stone Age habits make them the most interesting of all primitive people. 173

Legends in east Arnhem Land refer vaguely to mythical ancestors from 'over the sea' and 'beyond the dawn', whilst hordes in the west believe that their creator came from beyond the sunset. A precocious Yulengor explained that his people had not hitherto understood the kind of canoe used by the legendary ancestors, but, he said: 'Now we know they came in the Ark.'

Scanty evidence suggests that long before the days of the Pharaohs, Stone Age men paddled their canoes through the chain of islands linking Asia to Australia, probably carrying all they possessed in the way of dingoes, spears, stone axes, a smouldering fire-stick and bark bundles of food. In Arnhem Land they live still as Stone Age hunters. 174

In appearance, aborigines are well built, and slim. Contrary to popular belief they are not tall, though a casual glance over hordes here and there in east Arnhem Land might lead to this assumption. In actual fact the average height of aboriginal men is two inches less than the five feet eight inches of the average Englishman; aboriginal women average five feet one inch in height. 141

Long forearms and shins lend to the illusion of height. A man will sit with a foot drawn in and his knee bent upright [516]

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117



262 Variety in this otherwise uninteresting vegetable diet is provided by fish, birds, reptiles, and small animals. Women [967] fossick in jungles for land-snails and large white wood-grubs, 226 and when the tide is out they comb the mud flats and reefs 227 for mangrove worms, shellfish, oysters, lobsters, and crabs.

231 Some women train dingoes to help in their ceaseless search for small animals, reptiles, birds, and eggs. A dingo pup, captured in the bush, henceforth shares the family shelter, travels in the canoe, and is fed and petted with the children. They are often called 'son' by the owner and referred to by the relationship term used for the owner or his child. When [766] a favoured dog dies, it is buried and wept over in much the same way as a child. Women gash their heads and wail, one of the men conducts a mourning-song and dance, and I have seen them switch themselves with leafy twigs to drive off the canine ghost!

Dingoes breed freely with domesticated dogs, and most of the wild dogs in Arnhem Land now bear unmistakable traces of the white man's dog. However, the pure-bred dingo is by no means extinct, and there are many of these large, strong, good-looking brown dogs in Arnhem Land. When they are well fed (they seldom are), they grow to almost twice the size of a kelpie and are attractive in appearance, but they cannot bark. It seems certain that the dingo [774] migrated with the first aborigines, and Dr F. Wood-Jones, an authority on the dingo, says: 'The dingo and the Stone Age dog of Europe are practically identical and both but little removed from the Palearctic wolf stock from which they sprang. Man and dog were both migrants.'

773 Several Yulengor legends referred to the creation of dingoes by aboriginal Ancestors. In one story, it was said that having already formed the nuclei of several hordes, the Ancestors came to the grassy plains south of Arnhem Bay, where they made a magpie, an opossum, and two dingoes. Summer showers drove the birds into a tree, where they